

**Anwar slams government for stoking racial tension**  
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Opposition figurehead Anwar Ibrahim has accused ruling party leaders of stoking racial tensions over plans to dismantle discrimination policies favouring ethnic Muslim Malays. MCPX

Anwar's PKR is a member of a three-party opposition alliance which made major gains in March 8 elections, seizing control of four states and more than a third of parliamentary seats.

anwar ceramah in rembau 150208 anwarThe alliance's plans to transform the New Economic Policy (NEP), introduced in 1971 to boost majority Malays, has drawn criticism from the ruling Umno which led a protest in Penang.

Anwar said the opposition wanted to reform the NEP so that it uplifted all poor Malaysians, no matter what their race, and accused elements in Umno of inciting fear among Malays over the plan.

"I am... deeply concerned with the attempt being made by certain elements to stoke the flames of racial hatred" in the aftermath of the elections, Anwar said in a statement late yesterday.

penang komtar umno protest 140308 anuar ibrahim"This vicious campaign is being orchestrated by a small number of very wealthy Malays and Umno leaders who are themselves guilty of squandering and abusing the NEP."

At least 1,000 people led by Umno figures defied a police ban to gather outside the office of the newly appointed chief minister of Penang on Friday. The island state had voted in a new government led by the predominantly non-Malay DAP.

"These people are now using the Umno and government-controlled media to incite fears among the Malays and deflect attention away from their electoral defeat and from Umno's historic failures to address the needs of all Malaysians including the poor and marginalised Malays," said Anwar.

"I ask my fellow Malaysians to reject the desperate attempts by some Umno members to salvage the remnants of a broken party by pandering to people's fears and sowing divisions and disunity among the people of our nation."

**PM warns of dire consequences**

All three opposition parties have endorsed the NEP reform plan, including the conservative Islamic party PAS, saying it fosters cronyism and corruption and has neglected impoverished Malays in rural areas.

The policy, which gives advantages in education, housing and business, has been criticised as outdated, and benefiting mostly an elite group of Malay entrepreneurs who enjoy preferences in government contracts.

Anwar has reassured that Malays will not be forgotten under his new Malaysian Economic Agenda which he said is "committed to the upliftment and betterment of the poor and marginalised Malays, Chinese and Indians, Ibans and Kadazans."

"We plan to implement new mechanisms to channel economic aid to the vast numbers of petty traders and small businessmen in Malay communities and ensure that educational opportunities, microcredit financing schemes, social and welfare services and other forms of economic relief are made available to the Malays."

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi last week cautioned the opposition to tread carefully, warning of "dire consequences" if it targeted Malay rights.

"They must be responsible when making comments. Don't make comments just to be popular with a certain race," he told state Bernama news agency in a television interview late Friday.

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